

Sūrah Wāqī‘ah

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrahs

This is the seventh *sūrah* of this group and on it ends its Makkan *sūrahs*. It summarizes the whole discussion regarding reward and punishment mentioned from Sūrah Qāf till Sūrah Raḥmān. In these previous *sūrahs*, all the details on this topic have been stated in the light of arguments based on human intellect and human nature as well as on the world within a person and that outside him. In this *sūrah*, instead of explaining these arguments, the Quraysh have been informed of the real result: the Day of Judgement is an indubitable event and there is not the slightest uncertainty in it. They shall necessarily encounter a world in which the values and standards of respect and humiliation will be entirely different from what they are witnessing in this world. In the coming world, respect and success shall be reserved for those who had adhered to faith and righteous deeds. They will attain the positions of the (*muqarrabin*) favoured ones and the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* (companions of the right hand). All the successes of Paradise shall be reserved for him. As for those who regarded this world to be everything and were infatuated with it, they will be regarded among the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl* (companions of the left hand) and shall have to face the eternal punishment of Hell.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-10)

The *sūrah* begins with the assertion that the Day of Judgement is certain to come. There is no doubt about its arrival. The Day shall evaluate a person according to his faith and deeds; it shall upgrade many a people and downgrade many. As a result of this assessment, people shall be divided into three categories on that day: the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn*, the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl* and the *sābiqūn al-awwalūn*.

Verses (11-26)

Those nearest to the Almighty will be the *sābiqūn al-awwalūn*. The details of the gifts and favours of their Lord which they shall receive in Paradise are recounted together with the qualities of the *sābiqūn al-awwalūn* which actually entitled them to be regarded among this group.

Verses (27-40)

The second place shall be occupied by the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn*. A delineation is made of the bounties and rewards which they shall be blessed with in Paradise and their personal high character which made them worthy of being regarded among this group.

Verses (41-48)

The fate of the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl* is depicted and a reference is made to a few of their grave sins which led them to this punishment.

Verses (49-74)

The arrogant among the Quraysh are addressed and warned that they shall end up with the same fate as that of the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl* if they persist in deviating from the truth and in denying the Prophet (sws). In this regard, a reference is made to certain self-evident arguments which bear evidence to the Day of Reward and Punishment. Such is the nature of these arguments that only the stubborn can deny them.

Verses (75-96)

An indication is made about the exalted status of the Quran and the fact that it is above and beyond the reach of Satan and his agents. The Quraysh are again cautioned not to turn a deaf ear to this sublime message and invite their doom. The fate about which this Book is informing them is a reality. Fortunate are they who will today strive to attain a place among the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* and the *sābiqūn al-awwalūn*; otherwise, they should remember that those who will not do so shall end up among the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl* and shall face a terrible fate.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ (١) لَيْسَ لَوْفَعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ (٢) خَافِضَةٌ رَافِعَةٌ (٣) إِذَا رُجَّتِ الْأَرْضُ رَجًا (٤) وَبُسَّتِ الْجِبَالُ بَسًا (٥) فَكَانَتْ هَبَاءً مُنْبَثًا (٦) وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً (٧) فَأَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ (٨) وَأَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ (٩) وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ (١٠) أُولَئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (١١) فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ (١٢) ثُلَّةٌ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٣) وَقَلِيلٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ (١٤) عَلَى سُرُرٍ مَوْضُونَةٍ (١٥) مُتَكِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا مُتَقَابِلِينَ (١٦) يَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُخَلَّدُونَ (١٧) بِأَكْوَابٍ وَأَبَارِيقَ وَكَأْسٍ مِنْ مَعِينٍ (١٨) لَا يُصَدَّعُونَ عَنْهَا وَلَا يُنْفَوْنَ (١٩) وَقَفَاكِهِمْ مِمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُونَ (٢٠) وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (٢١) وَحُورٌ عِينٌ (٢٢)

كَأَمْثَالِ اللَّوْثِ الْمَكُونِ (٢٣) جَزَاءَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٢٤) لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا تَأْثِيمًا (٢٥) إِلَّا قِيلًا سَلَامًا سَلَامًا (٢٦) وَأَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ (٢٧) فِي سِدْرٍ مَخْضُودٍ (٢٨) وَطَلْحٍ مَّنْضُودٍ (٢٩) وَظِلٍّ مَّمْدُودٍ (٣٠) وَمَاءٍ مَّسْكُوبٍ (٣١) وَفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ (٣٢) لَا مَقْطُوعَةٍ وَلَا مَمْنُوعَةٍ (٣٣) وَفُرُشٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ (٣٤) إِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَاهُنَّ إِنْشَاءً (٣٥) فَجَعَلْنَاهُنَّ أَبْكَارًا (٣٦) غُرُبًا أَثْرَابًا (٣٧) لِأَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ (٣٨) ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٣٩) وَثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ (٤٠) وَأَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ (٤١) فِي سَمُومٍ وَحَمِيمٍ (٤٢) وَظِلٍّ مِّنْ يَحْمُومٍ (٤٣) لَا بَارِدٍ وَلَا كَرِيمٍ (٤٤) إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُتْرَفِينَ (٤٥) وَكَانُوا يُصِرُّونَ عَلَى الْحِنثِ الْعَظِيمِ (٤٦) وَكَانُوا يَقُولُونَ أَإِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَإِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ (٤٧) أَوْ آبَاءُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ (٤٨) قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَالْآخِرِينَ (٤٩) لَمَجْمُوعُونَ إِلَىٰ مِيقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُومٍ (٥٠) ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ أَيْهَا الضَّالُّونَ الْمُكَذِّبُونَ (٥١) لَا تَكُونُونَ مِن شَجَرٍ مِّن زُقُومٍ (٥٢) فَمَا لُوْثُونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ (٥٣) فَشَارِبُونَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَمِيمِ (٥٤) فَشَارِبُونَ شَرْبَ الْهِيمِ (٥٥) هَذَا نُزْلُهُمْ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (٥٦)

Remember when that which is to happen shall happen. There is no semblance of falsity in its happening. It is one which elevates and one which relegates; when the earth will be totally rattled, and the mountains while being crushed to pieces will become dispersed dust. And you shall be divided into three groups. (1-7)

One group shall be of the companions of the right hand; so what to speak of the companions of the right hand! Another group shall be of the companions of the left hand; so what shall happen to the companions of the left hand! As for the foremost, they shall be the foremost. They shall be the favoured ones in gardens of delight: most among them will be from the early generations but only a few from the later ones. They shall recline on jewelled couches face to face. Immortal youths shall wait on them with bowls and ewers and cups of purest wine that will neither cause headaches nor take away their sanity; and fruits of their own choice and flesh of the birds they relish. And for them shall be large-eyed houris like protected pearls: a reward for their deeds. There they shall hear no absurd talk, no sinful speech. Only greetings and congratulations everywhere. (8-26)

And as for the companions of the right hand – what to speak of the companions of the right hand! among thornless lote-trees and clusters of bananas and vast shades; amidst gushing waters and abundant fruits,

never-ending, unforbidden; and bedding raised high. And for them shall be wives whom We would have created in a unique manner; thus We shall make them remain virgins, enchanting and of the same age. These favours shall be for the companions of the right hand. Among them will be many from later generations and also many from the early ones. (27-40)

As for the companions of the left hand! What a fate shall befall them! They shall be amidst scorching winds and seething water and in the shade of smoke which will neither be cool nor with any other benefit. Before this, they lived in comfort and persisted in the greatest sin and would say: "Would that when we die and turn to dust and bones, shall we be raised to life again? And our forefathers, too?" (41-48)

Tell them: "Those of old and those of the present age shall all be brought together till the prescribed time of an appointed day. Then you people! O those have been led astray and who have denied the truth! You shall eat from the tree of *zaqqūm* and fill your bellies with it. Then upon this you shall drink scalding water like a thirsty camel. This shall be their first feast on the Day of Reckoning." (49-56)

Explanation

إِذَا وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ (١) لَيْسَ لَوْفَعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ (٢)¹

The word الْوَاقِعَةُ refers to the Day of Judgement. Alluding to it by this word expresses its certainty. The arguments which substantiate the advent of this Day have been mentioned in detail in the previous *sūrahs* of this group. Moreover, the doubts and questions raised by the disbelievers regarding the possibility and happening of this Day have also been answered one by one. It is now said that these people should remember that when that which is to happen shall happen in spite of their doubts and objections, and that they shall not be able to run away from it in any way.

The word لَيْسَ لَوْفَعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ in كَاذِبَةٌ is a verbal noun like عَاقِبَةٌ and غَافِيَةٌ. It means that there is absolutely no doubt in its happening. If they suspiciously think that they are being falsely threatened about a catastrophe, let it be known to them that there is not a bit of falsehood in it. It is a certain event which they are bound to face; so if they want to meet a congenial fate, they must get ready to face it.

خَافِضَةٌ رَّافِعَةٌ (٣)²

The implication of the verse is that these people should not remain under

1. Remember when that which is to happen shall happen. There is no semblance of falsity in its happening.

2. It is one which elevates and one which relegates;

the misconception that the high position which they have today will always remain with them and those whom they are considering to be lowly and underprivileged will always remain so. The fact of the matter is that when that which is to happen comes, these heavens and the earth will appear with new laws. The standards of respect and honour will totally change. On that day, the believers will be blessed with all honour and status. People who have with them the investment and capital of faith will be elevated, and those who are deprived of this treasure will be deprived and humiliated. Here this fate is stated in a very succinct way. Coming up in verse seven is the detail of this elevation and relegation. It will become evident from it the standard according to which this will take place.

إِذَا رُجَّتِ الْأَرْضُ رَجًا (٤) وَبُسَّتِ الْجِبَالُ بَسًّا (٥) فَكَانَتْ هَبَاءً مُنْبَثًّا (٦)³

These verses portray the Day of Judgement: on that day, the earth shall be jolted and shaken, and the towering mountains which these naïve people regard to be eternal and unshakable will disperse like dust. It is evident from this that all the high structures in this earth will be levelled to the ground. Such an earthquake will ensue that it will cause the earth to severely shake and tremble and raze to the ground all the structures, edifices and castles on it. So much so, these gigantic mountains will become dust that will fly about. This subject is mentioned in Sūrah Hāqqah thus:

وُحِلَّتِ الْأَرْضُ فُدْكًا دَكَّةً وَاحِدَةً الْوَاقِعَةُ فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَقَعَتْ (٦٩: ١٤-١٥)

And the earth and the mountains shall be shattered to pieces with one crash. So on that day will happen which is to happen. (69:14-15)

وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً (٧) فَأَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ (٨) وَأَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ
مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ (٩) وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ (١٠)⁴

Mentioned in this verse are the details of the elevation and relegation referred to in verse three: on that day, mankind will be divided into three groups. One group will of the companions of the right hand, another of

3. When the earth will be totally rattled, and the mountains while being crushed to pieces will become dispersed dust.

4. And you shall be divided into three groups. One group shall be of the companions of the right hand; so what to speak of the companions of the right hand! Another group shall be of the companions of the left hand; so what shall happen to the companions of the left hand! As for the foremost, they shall be the foremost.

the companions of the left hand and the third of people who were the foremost (*sābiqūn*).

The Qur'ān itself has clarified that by the companions of the right hand, those people are implied who will receive their account in their right hands. Thus it is mentioned in Sūrah Hāqqah: فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَيَقُولُ: هَؤُلَاءِ أَقْرَبُوا كِتَابِيهِ إِنِّي ظَنَنْتُ أَنِّي مُلَاقٍ حِسَابِيهِ (٢٠: ٦٩) (Then he who is given his account in his right hand will say: "Read my account. I always thought that I shall have to face my reckoning." (69:19-20))

The companions of the left hand refer to people whose accounts will be handed over to them in their left hands. In Sūrah Hāqqah, they are mentioned in the following words:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ فَيَقُولُ يَالَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتَ كِتَابِيهِ وَلَمْ أَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيهِ يَالَيْتَهَا كَانَتْ الْقَاضِيَةَ مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنِّي مَالِي هَلَكَ عَنِّي سُلْطَانِيهِ (٢٥: ٦٩)

And he who is given his record in his left hand will say: "Would that I were not given my record or I were not aware of my account. Would that death were final. Of what use has been my wealth to me? I am robbed of all my authority." (69:25-29))

The word "the foremost" (*sābiqūn*) refers to people who were foremost in accepting the calls of the true religion and were blessed with the opportunity of serving it through their persons and wealth when there were few to serve it and mustering courage to help it was like putting oneself into danger. Consequently, in Sūrah Hādīd, which is the counterpart of this *sūrah*, this reality is discussed thus: لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنْكُمْ مَنْ أَنفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ (And those of you who will spend and wage war before the conquest of Makkah, and those who will spend and wage war afterwards will not be equal. These people will have a greater status than those who spend and wage war afterwards. Yet God has promised each a good reward. (57:10))

The interrogative found in مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ can express majesty and grandeur and can also express hate and disgust. Here it is used in the former connotation. The implication is that one cannot even begin to imagine the majesty and grandeur, eternal bliss and affluence and well-being of the companions of the right hand; how can one describe them and who can assess their extent? This style is adopted when the situation is such that the words of the incident portrayed are beyond words and imagination. There are many examples of this in the Qur'ān. In our language too, this style is common.

This same style found in مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ is to express the opposite:

hate and disgust. In other words, just as one cannot imagine the good fortune of the companions of the right hand, in a similar way, one cannot imagine the misfortune, humiliation and evil fate of the companions of the left hand; words are powerless to portray this. Only they will know who will face this situation.

In *وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ* the second *السَّابِقُونَ* is in the place of the enunciative (*khabar*) and the conciseness found in it has great eloquence in it. The implication is that one cannot imagine or describe the exalted position of the *السَّابِقُونَ* (the foremost); they are in fact the *السَّابِقُونَ* (the foremost); when they are the foremost, who can reach their status? They shall necessarily reach the pinnacle of human attributes and who can imagine this pinnacle in this world?

It is evident from these details that the view of those who think that these terms signify the arrangement of people who will stand before God is not correct. In the first place, in the assembly of God, the concept of right and left, front and back is a meaningless one. Even if this concept is accepted, then it is an acknowledged fact that the companions of the left hand will have no place in this gathering neither on the left nor at the back; their abode in fact shall be Hell as is evident from the succeeding verses of this *sūrah* and from other places of the Qur'ān.

The second thing which is evident is that the companions of the right hand do not refer to common Muslims, as understood by some people; they refer to people whose accounts will be handed over in their right hands to honour them, and they will be very happy and joyous on their achievements. There also exist among common Muslims people about whom one would have to be too generous to think that their accounts will be handed over to them in their right hands and will be worthy of gleefully exclaiming: *هَآؤُمْ أَفْرَأُوا كِتَابِيهِ* (٦٩: ١٩) (read my account, (69:19)). As far as the question is concerned as to what the difference between the companions of the right hand and the foremost (*sābiqūn*) is, I have already alluded to it earlier and more explanation is coming up.

أُولَئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (١١) فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ (١٢) ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٣) وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ (١٤)⁵

Since it was these *sābiqūn* who were the leaders and pioneers of the caravan, their reward is mentioned the foremost: they shall be nearest to God; however, they shall reside in the Paradise of favours (*جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ*) which has no concept of any court of God in it. It is evident from this that there will be Paradises for the *sābiqūn* in accordance with their

5. They shall be the favoured ones in gardens of delight: most among them will be from the early generations but only a few from the later ones.

various grades and positions where they will reside. Some more details of their Paradise are coming up in the succeeding verses.

The verses (١٤) *وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ* and (١٣) *ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ* tell us about the fortunate who will be counted among the *sābiqūn*: most of them will be from the earlier generations and a few from the later ones. The word *ثُلَّةٌ* means “group” or “party”; however, since the word *قَلِيلٌ* (less) is used in contrast to it, it should be construed to mean a large group.

The words *أَوَّلِينَ* and *آخِرِينَ* refer to the early and later part of this *ummah*.

Earlier, I have alluded to a verse of Sūrah Ḥadīd evident from which is that the status before God of those who spent in the way of God and waged *jihād* for this cause will be greater than those who were fortunate enough to be able to do after the conquest – though befitting is the reward of God for both. In other words, though the later generations in their collective capacity will not be able to reach the same status as the earlier ones yet the way to enter the ranks of companions of the right hand is open for them if they are sincere and practicing.

The words *ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ* also show that not all the earlier generations will end up among the *muqarrabīn* (favoured ones of God); only their majority will be able to do so. The reason for this is that this rank does not relate only to any specific period; the real factor in it is the personality traits and deeds. It is possible that a person may be the foremost in embracing faith, however, he is not able to win the rank of the *muqarrabīn* on the basis of his courage, sacrifices and strength of faith.

Similarly, the words *وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ* show that there will be people among the later generations who will be fortunate enough to be able to secure a place among the *sābiqūn*. Obviously, these will be people who would adhere to the truth even in times of trial and continue to call people towards the truth and however adverse the circumstances may be and however few they may be, they will never lose strength. Such a group of people will continue to grace this *ummah* in every period of time, as is evident from some Ḥadīth narratives. Though these people will be among the later period, yet they will be the foremost as far as their services are concerned. The Prophet Jesus (sws) has alluded to this reality in the following words: “Many of those who come later will be in front.”

Here it may be kept in mind that though these verses relate to this *ummah*; however, in principle they can be applied to the followers of every prophet and messenger. Consequently, at another place this is stated as a general principle thus: *ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ يُأْتِنُ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ* (٣٥:٣٢) (We then bestowed the Book on those of Our servants whom We have chosen. Some sin against their souls, some follow a middle course, and

some, by God's leave, vie with each other in charitable works: this is the supreme virtue. (35:32))

A deliberation on the words of this verse will show that only the words are different: it too mentions the same three groups which are referred to in this very *sūrah*: the companions of the right hand, the companions of the left hand and the *sābiqūn*.

عَلَى سُرُرٍ مَوْضُونَةٍ (١٥) مُتَكِينِينَ عَلَيْهَا مُتَقَابِلِينَ (١٦) يَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَدَانِ مُخَلَّدُونَ (١٧)
بِأَكْوَابٍ وَأَبَارِيقَ وَكَأْسٍ مِّن مَّعِينٍ (١٨) لَا يُصَدَّعُونَ عَنْهَا وَلَا يُنْزَفُونَ (١٩) وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِّمَّا
يَتَخَيَّرُونَ (٢٠) وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (٢١) وَحُورٌ عِينٌ (٢٢) كَأَمْثَالِ اللُّؤْلُؤِ الْمَكْنُونِ (٢٣)⁶

These are the details of the Paradise of the *muqarrabīn*. First, their sitting place and the manner of their reclining in it is portrayed: they will sit on jewelled and gold plated thrones facing one another. Some people have interpreted the word *مَوْضُونَةٍ* in a different sense. However, in my opinion, its true meaning is "jewelled". The ancient kings of Persia would grace their thrones which were gold plated and decked with various jewels like pearls and other expensive stones.

The word *مُتَكِينِينَ* automatically encompasses the meaning of "cushions" because cushions on thrones are necessary to recline against, and since ancient times these were the essential supplements to the royal throne.

Sitting while facing one another indicates that their hearts will not have any envy, spite or ill-feeling for one another. People whose hearts have malice for one another sit facing away from each other. The Qur'ān, however, at other places, has specified that the hearts of the dwellers of Paradise will be absolutely free from spite and jealousy. For this reason, they will sit face to face the way sincere and affectionate relatives and friends do so.

The following verses يَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَدَانِ مُخَلَّدُونَ (١٧) بِأَكْوَابٍ وَأَبَارِيقَ وَكَأْسٍ مِّن مَّعِينٍ (١٨) لَا يُصَدَّعُونَ عَنْهَا وَلَا يُنْزَفُونَ (١٩) وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِّمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُونَ (٢٠) وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (٢١) refer to the items which will be presented to satisfy their taste-buds: vigilant youths will constantly wait upon them with ewers and cups of the purest wine.

The word *مُخَلَّدُونَ* shows that these youths will forever remain of the same age. They will be eternal waiters. To serve gatherings, youth of a certain

6. They shall recline on jewelled couches face to face. Immortal youths shall wait on them with bowls and ewers and cups of purest wine that will neither cause headaches nor take away their sanity; and fruits of their own choice and flesh of the birds they relish. And for them shall be large-eyed houris like protected pearls:

age are regarded to be the most appropriate, well-mannered, enthusiastic and alert. For this reason, the Almighty will always keep them of the same age. Since an attendant who is aware of the temperament of his master can serve him best, for this reason, the youth deputed to people will always remain with them to serve them. Some people are of the opinion that the children of the disbelievers who die in their youth will be put to this service of the dwellers of Paradise by the Almighty. Though there is nothing in the Qur'ān which points to this, yet there is nothing which is against this either. This is because there is no reason for the children of the disbelievers to go to Hell. Also, it is not essential that they are put to this service only. Vast is God's Paradise and He is very gracious. He can even grant them a place in Paradise because of their innocence.

The word أَكْوَابٌ is the plural of كَوْبٌ. كَوْبٌ and cup are the same. The word أَبَارِيقٌ is the plural of إِبْرِيقٌ which appears to be an arabacized version of the Persian word آب ریز. It is an established fact that the Arabs have borrowed many cultural words from non-Arabs. The word كَأْسٌ is used both for the content and the container ie. wine and wine-cups. The word مَعِينٌ has also been used for pure water and fountain of pure water in the Qur'ān and also for the fountain of pure wine. Here, it is used in this last meaning.

The words لَا يُصَدَّعُونَ عَنْهَا وَلَا يُنزِفُونَ say that the wine will be such that its real benefit of giving bliss and delight will be there, yet it will be devoid of all harmful effects which plague the wines of this world. The wine of this world inflicts a person with inebriation, headaches and tiredness; however, the wine of Paradise will be free from these evil effects. The greatest evil of this world's wine is that it causes a person to lose his senses – which are the greatest asset of a person. A moment of deprivation of the senses can lead him to several severe hazards. The wine of Paradise will not be afflicted with this poison. The expression نَزَفَ الْجَب means ذهب عقله (a person lost his senses).

Together with wine, the verses (٢١-٢٢) وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِّمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُونَ وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ mention other delicacies which will be present to please their taste buds. The young waiters will present to them fruits of their choice and meat of the birds they relish. Among edibles, these are the two things mentioned at the top. It is as if their mention was enough to mention all others. The qualifying words يَتَخَيَّرُونَ and يَشْتَهُونَ show that the choice and selection of each person will be given full consideration. They will be presented fruits they will choose and the meat of those birds will be given to them which they desire.

All the luxuries and indulgence of life is incomplete without one's wife which the Almighty has made a means of comfort and assurance for a

person. Just as a person needs such a partner and feels lonely without her, similarly, in Paradise too without her, all its luxury is incomplete. Thus, the Almighty will bless him with large-eyed houris who would be pure and untouched like hidden pearls. These two features of theirs encompass all the outer and inner aspects of their beauty.

جَزَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ⁷(٢٤)

This is the real success achieved by the self-less *muqarrabīn*. The verse says that whatever they will be given, they will be given in return for their deeds. They will be entitled to it and the gracious Lord will definitely give them what they earned. Here one needs to keep in consideration one aspect of human nature: the value of a thing which a person has earned as a right is much greater than what he may get accidentally even if the latter is greater in amount.

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا تَأْثِيمًا (٢٥) إِلَّا قِيلًا سَلَامًا سَلَامًا⁸(٢٦)

These verses point at the pure and unadulterated bliss and ecstasy of the *muqarrabīn*: whatever nonsensical and frivolous talks of their enemies and criticizers they had to listen to ended with the previous world and so did the harms and losses they had to bear. In Paradise, they will neither hear any nonsensical talk nor any sinful conversation. Peace and mercy will embrace them from all sides. This will be from God, the angels and from their own companions as well. Morning and evening, they will be engulfed in these cries.

وَأَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ⁹(٢٧)

From here begins the description of the Paradise given to the companions of the right hand. Earlier, they were referred to by the words *aṣḥāb al-maymanah* which shows that the expression *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* and *aṣḥāb al-maymanah* have the same meaning in the Qur'ān: they are the people whose accounts will be handed over in their right hands.

7. A reward for their deeds they had been doing.

8. There they shall hear no absurd talk, no sinful speech. Only greetings and congratulations everywhere.

9. And as for the companions of the right hand – what to speak of the companions of the right hand!

فِي سِدْرٍ مَّخْضُودٍ (٢٨) وَطَلْحٍ مَّنْضُودٍ (٢٩) وَظِلٍّ مَّمْدُودٍ (٣٠) وَمَاءٍ مَّسْكُوبٍ (٣١)
وَفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ (٣٢) لَا مَقْطُوعَةٍ وَلَا مَمْنُوعَةٍ (٣٣)¹⁰

These verses mention the fruits of Paradise, its shades and its freshness. The word سِدْر refers to lote-trees. In our areas, lote-trees do not have much significance. Hence, it is possible that the question arises in the mind of some people as to why this fruit is worthy of being mentioned by the Qur'ān. Here, firstly it needs to be understood that the lote-trees of each area are not the same. In some areas, its fruits are very tasty, sweet-smelling and have brilliant colours. Secondly, these lote-trees are of Paradise; they can only be mentioned in the form of a parable in this world. We have no means to know of their reality. Only those people will be able to know their reality who will be included among the companions of the right hand. It is also evident from the Qur'ān that this tree has special significance in the eyes of the Almighty:

وَلَقَدْ رَأَاهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا
يَغْشَىٰ مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَعَىٰ (٥٣: ١٣-١٧)

And the Prophet saw Gabriel descending another time near the farthest lote-tree – near it is the Garden of Abode – when that lote-tree was covered with what covered it; his eyes did not wander, nor did they turn aside. (53:16-17).

While explaining these verses in the light of indications from the Qur'ān, I had written that this lote-tree is the one which is found at the junction of this world and the next. It was on it that the Prophet (sws) observed the light and divine manifestations mentioned in the majestic words of 53:16-17 quoted above. The initial observations of the Prophet Moses (sws) regarding prophethood as stated in the Torah and the Qur'ān also mention a tree from which he heard the voice of the Almighty and saw light and divine manifestations on it. Though there is no indication in the Qur'ān from which one can gather the type of the tree, yet it is evident from the similarity of the two incidents that that tree too was the lote-tree.

The word مَخْضُودٍ which qualifies سِدْر shows that this lote-tree would not be injurious the way lote-trees of this world are: if people want to pluck its fruit, their hands are wounded by its thorns, The lote-trees of Paradise will be thorn-less and will inflict no harm. Whenever the dwellers of

10. Among thornless lote-trees and clusters of bananas and vast shades; amidst gushing waters and abundant fruits, never-ending, unforbidden.

Paradise want, they will be able to pluck its fruit. The word **خَصَدَ** is used to mean to cut the thorns of something which has thorns. Here the purpose is to show that like its fruit the lote-trees themselves will be different than what they are in this world. It may be kept in consideration that in this world the better the quality of a lote-tree the lesser the thorns it will have. It is the wild lote-trees who have more thorns. The destruction of the Paradise-like orchard of the people of the Sabā' mentioned in the Qur'ān also portrays the destruction of the lote-trees which became brambles. It is evident from this that its fruit was among their favourites and these trees embellished their orchards. As far as the family of this tree is concerned, it is related to the family of apples.

Consider next the verse: **وَطَلُحٍ مَّنْضُودٍ**. The word **طَلُحٌ** means "a banana". The word **مَّنْضُودٌ** signifies that these bananas will be joined to one another in layers. The beauty of their selection and arrangement will show that the Almighty has made elaborate efforts to choose them to gratify the taste-buds of His people.

The verses **وَوَظِلٍّ مَّمْدُودٍ (٣٠) وَمَاءٍ مَّسْكُوبٍ (٣١)** depict the luxuriance and freshness of the orchard. Because of their sturdiness and lushness, these trees will be so adjacent to one another that sunlight will not be able to pass through them. For this reason, there will be shade every where and the orchard shall be continuously watered so that its splendour does not decrease.

The verses **وَفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ (٣٢) لَا مَقْطُوعَةٍ وَلَا مَمْنُوعَةٍ (٣٣)** imply that the fruits mentioned earlier are just mentioned as examples. There will be several other fruits and they shall be very different from their counterparts in this world. Here it is essential to pluck the fruits in a certain period of time otherwise they wither away themselves; however, the trees in Paradise will be ever-fruit bearing. Similarly, in this world, there can be a year in which an orchard bears fruit and there can be a year when it does not or bears less fruit. The orchards of Paradise will not be afflicted with this shortcoming. The Almighty will never ever deprive them of fruit.

وَفُرُشٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ (٣٤) إِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَاهُنَّ إِنْشَاءً (٣٥) فَجَعَلْنَاهُنَّ أَبْكَارًا (٣٦) غُرُبًا أَتْرَابًا (٣٧)¹¹

Mentioned in these verses are their seats and their wives. In the case of the *muqarrabīn* the sequence, one may remember, is different. Some of the reasons for this difference are psychological; however, this is not the opportune time to go into these details.

11. And bedding raised high. And for them shall be wives whom We would have created in a unique manner; thus We shall make them remain virgins, enchanting and of the same age.

They shall sit on bedding raised high and for them will be wives whom the Almighty would have raised in a special way. Here a question arises: A pronoun is used for the wives without any antecedent. No doubt that this is so; however, concomitant indication for this is very evident. There is a proverb in Arabic which says: *الشيء بالشيء يذكر* (one remembers a thing from another); in this case, a mention of wives after a mention of rugs is of similar nature. Because of this association, they are mentioned in the form of a pronoun which carries both the eloquence of brevity in it and also the teaching that women should be mentioned in a hidden manner. One does not need to provide any evidence for the fact that there are instances in the Qur'ān in which thrones and rugs are mentioned with wives. However, just to satisfy the hearts, I am citing some verses below.

The words in Sūrah Tūr are:

مُتَكِّينَ عَلَى سُرُرٍ مَّصْفُوفَةٍ وَزَوَّجْنَاهُمْ بِحُورٍ عِينٍ (٥٢: ٢٠).

They will recline on thrones laid out in succession and We will marry them with large eyed houris. (52:20)

In the Sūrah Yūnus, it is said:

هُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُمْ فِي ظِلَالٍ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ مُتَكِئُونَ (٥٦: ٣٦)

Together with their spouses, they shall recline in shady groves upon thrones. (36:56)

While explaining the nature of these houris, the verse *إِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَاهُنَّ إِنْشَاءً* says that the Almighty would have raised them in a special way. Thus the features and attributes of these women will be totally different from those of this world. The virginity, beauty and youth of the women of this world are temporary and mortal. A poet has said:

اگر ماند شبے ماند شبے دیگر نمی ماند

(If it stays, it will stay for one night and not more)

However, the Almighty would have raised the houris of Paradise in a very different manner. Hence, their virginity, beauty and youth will never be lost.

In the verses *فَجَعَلْنَاهُنَّ أَبْكَارًا* (٣٦) *عُرُبًا أَثَرَابًا* (٣٧), the *ف* explains the special manner in which they would be raised: they will always remain virgins. Whenever, their husband will come near them, it will be as if they have come near them for the first time.

The word *عُرُبًا* is a plural of *عُرُوبٌ*. It means “a beloved and beautiful

wife". Obviously when their virginity, beauty and youth will never vanish, there will be no reason for their husbands to lose interest in them; on the other hand, these wives will always remain as desired and cherished like a fresh and fragrant flower.

The word أَثْرَابًا is the plural of ثَرَبٌ. It means someone who is of the same age; however, people who have a linguistic taste of Arabic know that it is pre-dominantly used for women. Hence, in my opinion, here it means "women who are bosom friends". In Sūrah Nabā', the words used are كَوَاعِبُ أَثْرَابًا (the virgins, bosom friends). The implication is that all the houris given to the dwellers of Paradise will be bosom friends and of the same age; for this reason, neither the question of preferring one to the other will arise nor will the emotions of jealousy and envy mutually arise between them. Just as these houris will always remain virgins and young, their husbands too will remain young and graceful.

لِّأَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ (٣٨)¹²

These words can relate to the previous verse and can also be regarded as an enunuciative (*khavar*) of a suppressed inchoative (*mubtadā'*). In the first case, the meaning will be that these houris raised in a special way with special attributes by the Almighty will be for the companions of the right hand. In the second case, the meaning will be that all these blessings which are mentioned above will be for the companions of the right hand in the Hereafter. I am inclined to the first of these interpretations; however, whichever among the two is adopted, there will be no difference as in the purport of these verses; there will just be a subtle difference in the eloquence of the discourse which can be felt by all those who have a flair for the language. For this reason, there is no need to go into the reasons of preferring one to the other.

ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٣٩) وَثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ (٤٠)¹³

Earlier it was mentioned that a greater proportion of the *sābiqūn* will belong to the earlier generations; very few from the later generations would be fortunate enough to be regarded among them. Here, in these verses, the Qur'ān says that there will be one group from both the earlier and later generations. It is evident from this that till the Day of Judgement several people will continue to be categorized among them, and on that Day they will be raised in the form of one group.

12. These favours shall be for the companions of the right hand.

13. Among them will be many from later generations and also many from the early ones.

وَأَصْحَابُ الشَّمَالِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الشَّمَالِ (٤١) فِي سَمُومٍ وَحَمِيمٍ (٤٢) وَظِلٍّ مِّنْ يَحْمُومٍ (٤٣)
لَّا بَارِدٍ وَلَا كَرِيمٍ (٤٤)¹⁴

These verses depict the fate of the companions of the left hand, i.e. people who will be handed over their accounts in their left hands. They shall be amid scorching winds, blazing fire and seething water. When after being agonized by the heat they will run towards water, they will only get boiling water to drink. They will spend their life in this running about. This subject is discussed thus in the previous *sūrah*: يَطُوفُونَ بَيْنَهَا (they shall circle around it between it and its boiling water, (55:44)).

The words وَظِلٍّ مِّنْ يَحْمُومٍ imply that they will not be able to see any shade. Only the shade of black smoke will be there for them. It will be devoid of all the benefits which shade has. The real benefit of shade is coolness; however, the shade of this smoke will contain all the harms which are found in smoke but will have no coolness. Similarly, there could have been some more benefits of this shade: for example, asylum from the reach of the fire; however, this too would not be there for them. The word كَرِيم means “one that has benefits”. In other words, the words imply that this shade will neither be cool nor of any benefit. In Sūrah Mursalāt, this subject is discussed in the following words: لَا ظَلِيلٍ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْهَبِ (٣١:٧٧) (it does not provide shade nor protection from the flames, (77:31)).

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُتْرَفِينَ (٤٥) وَكَانُوا يُصِرُّونَ عَلَى الْحِنثِ الْعَظِيمِ (٤٦) وَكَانُوا يَقُولُونَ أَإِذَا
مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَإِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ (٤٧) أَوْ آبَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ (٤٨)¹⁵

These verses refer to their major sins which led them to this fate. The style of the discourse is such as if their fate has been revealed to them and it is being told why these unfortunate people reached this fate.

The first thing mentioned is إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُتْرَفِينَ: These people were very affluent and lived in luxury and lavishness in the previous world. This is not a mention of their crime. It only mentions its severity. What is implied is that the Almighty had blessed them with comfort and

14. As for the companions of the left hand! What a fate shall befall them! They shall be amidst scorching winds and seething water and in the shade of smoke which will neither be cool nor with any other benefit.

15. Before this, they lived in comfort and persisted in the greatest sin and say: “Would that when we die and turn to dust and bones, shall we be raised to life again? And our forefathers, too?”

affluence; it was their obligation to these favours that they be grateful and obedient to Him; on the contrary, they became arrogant and conceited, and became adamant on the greatest of sins.

The second objective is to highlight the elevation and relegation which is mentioned as an attribute of the Day of Judgement at the beginning of the *sūrah* by the words: **خَافِضَةٌ رَّافِعَةٌ**. People who were at the top in this world have fallen into the deep pit of the Almighty's punishment.

In the verse **وَكَاثِبُونَ عَلَى الْجَنِّ الْعَظِيمِ**, the word **جَنِّ** means "sin". It is qualified by the word (great) which indicates that it refers to polytheism. As per the philosophy of religion, polytheism is the greatest sin, and the Qur'ān has also referred to it as the greatest wrong.

The verses **وَكَاثِبُونَ أَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَإِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ (٤٧) أَوْ آبَاؤُنَا (٤٨) الْأَوَّلُونَ (٤٨)** mention their other crimes: they did not believe in the Day of Judgement and the reward and punishment that will take place on that day; they reckoned that it was impossible to raise them to life after their bodies would decay and decompose into dust. So when they would be informed of the reward and punishment of the Hereafter, they would make fun of it by asking how they and their forefathers who passed away a long time ago will be raised to life again when they will be nothing but dust and bones. The implication would be that this is an unlikely matter, and those who are threatening them with this fate are merely trying to fool them and they too are foolish.

قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَالْآخِرِينَ (٤٩) لَمَجْمُوعُونَ إِلَى مِيقَاتٍ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُومٍ (٥٠)¹⁶

After mentioning the crimes of the companions of the left hand, the Prophet (sws) is asked to answer the Quraysh. He should tell them that in response to his reminders about the Hereafter, they too regard it to be an improbable event; so they should now listen up that all the earlier and later people will be kept on being gathered till a fixed time; as soon as that time arrives, they shall be raised to life again. In other words, what is conveyed to them is that they must not think that if the dead have vanished from among them, they have also vanished from the Almighty. All of them are being assembled in the repository of God, and as soon as the time of reward and punishment comes, all of them will be raised – whether they are from the earlier generations or the later ones. The preposition **إِلَى** is used after **لَمَجْمُوعُونَ** the way it is said in *Sūrah An'ām*: **كَتَبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةُ (١٢:٦)** (God has decreed mercy for Himself, and will necessarily keep gathering you till the Day of Judgement, (6:12)).

16. Tell them: "Those of old and those of the present age shall all be brought together till the prescribed time of an appointed day."

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ أَتِيهَا الضَّالُّونَ الْمُكَذِّبُونَ (٥١) لَا يَكُونُ مِنْ شَجَرٍ مِّنْ زَقُّومٍ (٥٢) فَمَالِئُونَ مِنْهَا
الْبُطُونَ (٥٣) فَشَارِبُونَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَمِيمِ (٥٤) فَشَارِبُونَ شُرْبَ الْهَيْمِ (٥٥)¹⁷

Here the Quraysh are addressed directly and told: O you who have gone astray and those who have denied, do you know what will happen when you will be raised up again? You shall eat from the sour and thorny leaves and fruits of the tree of *zaqqūm* and fill your bellies with it; then you shall drink scalding water like thirsty camels do.

They are addressed by the two attributes of الضَّالُّونَ and الْمُكَذِّبُونَ with regard to their crimes. Earlier on, their polytheism and denial of the Hereafter is mentioned. With respect to these, they are addressed as الضَّالُّونَ and الْمُكَذِّبُونَ. The implication is that they have gone astray from the path of monotheism and have also denied the Hereafter.

Earlier, it is said that they were among the wealthy and the affluent. With reference to this, their fodder in the Hereafter will be of *zaqqūm*. They will munch its leaves and thorns and drink boiling water after gulping them.

The word هَيْم is a plural of أَهْيَم. It refers to a camel who is afflicted with the malady of هِيَام (perpetual thirst): he keeps drinking water but his thirst is never quenched.

هَذَا نُزْلُهُمْ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (٥٦)¹⁸

I have explained at many places of this *tafsīr* that نُزْلُ refers to the edibles which are presented foremost to a guest as soon as he disembarks. The implication is that no one can imagine what these people – whose first dietary provisions are the tree of *zaqqūm* and hot water – will eat later.

Section II (Verses 57-74)

The succeeding verses discuss the arguments on the Day of Judgement and the reward and punishment which will take place on that day – something whose denial had been mentioned earlier. The style has an air of rebuke and reprimand in it. The coherence in the discourse is very

17. Then you people! O those have been led astray and who have denied the truth! You shall eat from the tree of *zaqqūm* and fill your bellies with it. Then upon this you shall drink scalding water like a thirsty camel.

18. This shall be their first feast the Day of Reckoning.

evident.

Readers may now proceed to read these verses.

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُونَ (٥٧) أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تُمْنُونَ (٥٨) أَأَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ
الْخَالِقُونَ (٥٩) نَحْنُ قَدَرْنَا بَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ (٦٠) عَلَى أَنْ تُبَدَّلَ أَمْثَالُكُمْ
وَنُنشِئَكُمْ فِي مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٦١) وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ النَّشْأَةَ الْأُولَىٰ فَلَوْلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٦٢) أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ
مَا تَحْرُثُونَ (٦٣) أَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ (٦٤) لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلَلْتُمْ
تَفَكَّهُونَ (٦٥) إِنَّا لَمُعْرِمُونَ (٦٦) بَلْ نَحْنُ مُحْرِمُونَ (٦٧) أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ الْمَاءَ الَّذِي تَشْرَبُونَ (٦٨)
أَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْزِلُونَ (٦٩) لَوْ نَشَاءُ جَعَلْنَاهُ أُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ (٧٠)
أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِي تُورُونَ (٧١) أَنْتُمْ أَنْشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَا أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْشِئُونَ (٧٢) نَحْنُ جَعَلْنَاهَا
تَذَكُّرًا وَمَتَاعًا لِلْمُقْوِينَ (٧٣) فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ (٧٤)

We have created you. So why do not you testify to the Day of Judgement? Have you pondered on that which you discharge? Do you fashion it or We? We have ordained death among you, and We are not helpless; in fact, We have the power to replace you with those like you and raise you in a world you know not. And you surely know of the first creation. So why then do you not receive a reminder from it? (57-62)

Have you reflected on what you sow? Is it you who nourish it or We? If We intend, We can turn it into bits; then you would end up bewildered. Indeed we have been fined; in fact we have been completely deprived. (63-67)

Just reflect on the water which you drink! Was it you who sent it down from the clouds or We? If We desire, We can turn it totally bitter; so why do not you people express gratitude? (68-70)

Just reflect on the fire which you light. Did you create its tree or We? We made it a reminder, and for the traveller a very beneficial thing. (71-73)

Glorify, then, the name of your Lord, the Supreme One. (74)

Explanation

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُونَ (٥٧)¹⁹

The address is directed to those who have denied the Day of Judgement – those whose statement أَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَئِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ (would that when we die and turn to dust and bones, shall we be raised to life again) is

19. We have created you. So why do not you testify to the Day of Judgement?

cited earlier. The Almighty has said that when He has created them and they do not deny this reality, then why are they hesitant in testifying to the Day of Judgement. The implication is that when the Almighty was not helpless in creating them the first time, how can He be powerless to create them a second time? Is creating the first time more difficult or the second? It is strange logic on their part that they acknowledge the happening of an event which is more difficult and what is obviously easier than it is regarded to be impossible by them. After the verb تُصَدِّقُونَ, its object بِالَّذِينَ or بِالْبَعْثِ is suppressed because of concomitant indications.

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تُمْنُونَ (٥٨) أَأَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُونَ (٥٩)²⁰

These verses direct attention to man's creation: if a person thinks that his own planning has some role in his creation without which the Almighty could not have created him, then he should come forward and see what role he has in it. A person only deposits a drop of his semen in the womb of his wife and then goes away. Who takes it out from this womb in the form of a healthy child after making it pass through various stages in layers of darkness and who makes it pass through the phases of childhood, maturity, youth and old age? Obviously, all these take place by the power and wisdom of God. So the God who can cause such changes on a drop of fluid and does not need anyone to fashion it, how is it difficult for Him to recreate man from merely the particles of dust without making him pass through these stages?

نَحْنُ قَدَرْنَا بَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ (٦٠)²¹

The implication of this verse is that there is no question for anyone to even imagine that he can escape from the clutches of God. The Almighty has spread out the web of death between people, and such is the nature of this web that everything is in its clasp. Whether a person is of high or low status and whether he is rich or poor, he is bound to face death. In this manner, the Almighty is gathering each and every person for the Day of Judgement. In verses 83-87, this subject will be brought up in detail.

عَلَى أَنْ تُبَدَّلَ أَمْثَالَكُمْ وَنُنشِئَكُمْ فِي مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٦١)²²

The implication of this verse is that if both life and death are in the

20. Have you pondered on that which you discharge? Do you fashion it or We?

21. We have ordained death among you, and We are not helpless;

22. We have the power to replace you with those like you and raise you in a world you know not.

control of God, how can He be unable to create in man's place a similar being? The fact of the matter is that God is not powerless to do this; He has the power to create someone similar, and to raise man up in a world he knows not.

The word عَلَى shows that the words بِمَسْبُوقِينَ should be taken in their positive meaning ie. (having power). The meaning thus would be that God is not powerless; He is powerful. Readers have witnessed in this *tafsīr* the changes in ellipsis and brevity caused by a change in preposition. This topic is discussed in Sūrah Ma'ārij thus:

إِنَّا لَقَادِرُونَ عَلَى أَنْ نُبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ (٧٠: ٤٠-٤١)

We can create them in a better form and We are not powerless in this regard. (70: 40-41)

The words وَنُنشِئُكُمْ فِي مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ imply that God will create man in a world whose physical laws will be totally different, and he is totally unaware of them. He expresses wonder and incredulity keeping in view the phenomenon of life and death found in this world at the fact that, mankind at the sound of a trumpet, will be recreated after its bodies decompose, and then each and every person will be faced with the account of his deeds. The fact of the matter is that all this will happen and then each person will be destined to live eternally in Paradise or in Hell.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ النَّشْأَةَ الْأُولَىٰ فَلَوْلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٦٢)

The implication of this verse is that if a person has not seen the world in which the Almighty will recreate Him, then this is not a logical reason for becoming adamant on its denial. A person does witness his creation in this world; why does he not learn the lesson from it that there is nothing improbable in being created again? Nothing is beyond the power of the Creator Who has brought mankind into this world. He can recreate them also and His providence and wisdom also entail that He do this. If He does not do this, then this would render this world to be meaningless and it is not befitting of the Creator of this universe do something like this.

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْرُثُونَ (٦٣) أَأَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ (٦٤)

After mentioning the creation of man, mentioned now are the sources of His providence which the Almighty has made available for nurturing

23. And you surely know of the first creation. So why then do you not receive a reminder from it?

24. Have you reflected on what you sow? Is it you who nourish it or We?

and nourishing him. Neither is a person entitled to these resources nor are they a result of his own planning. It needs to be kept in consideration that the Qur'ān at various places and in different styles has cited as an argument in favour of reward and punishment the various favours the Almighty has blessed man with to which he had no entitlement: the fact that they have been bestowed on him even though he had not earned them shows that one day he will be asked about each of these favours. The Qur'ān has also mentioned at various instances the fact that for the majority these favours became a basis of their arrogance. They thought that they were a result of their own planning and ability and that they had a right to these favours and in this conceit disregarded the Hereafter. If anyone tried to remind them of it, they gave the same answer which is cited earlier in the *sūrah* through the tongue of the affluent.

The verse prods the addressees and asks them: Have they ever deliberated on what they sow in the land. Is it they who nurture the seeds sown or is it God Who does so; just as in the birth of children all that a person does is that he sprinkles the seeds in the earth and ploughs the land and he very well sees that after that all the remaining phases are completed by God in a very elaborate manner, similarly it is God Who has given land the ability to nourish the seeds sown in it. It is He who has instilled in a seed the ability to benefit from the heat and fluids of the earth and bring forth from it needles of the plant stem and then He endowed these needles with the power to cleave asunder the chest of the earth and come out and grow in the open. Then it is God alone who supports these needles with stalks and causes the leaves to grow from them, and brings forth the spikes and fruits and flowers from them. Finally, they ripen and fill the needs of the farmer. A person should reflect on which of these tasks is accomplished by him and which he is potentially capable of.

لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلَلْتُمْ تَفَكَّهُونَ (٦٥)²⁵

In this matter, man's helplessness is evident from the fact that if God wants He can, by sending a strong wind or a hailstorm, rout the blooming harvest at the very time people are expressing joy at this success. The crop could be rendered to bits and pieces whilst people are busy indulging in frivolous talk.

The word تَفَكَّهُونَ is used here sarcastically. The implied meaning is that people will become so unnerved that they would not understand any explanation of this mishap and would have no clue of how others can help them in assessing the extent of this loss. Each person will have his

25. If We intend, We can turn it into bits; then you would end up bewildered.

own explanation to offer. Details are forthcoming.

إِنَّا لَمُعْرَمُونَ (٦٦) بَلْ نَحْنُ مُحْرَمُونَ (٦٧)²⁶

Some will say: “We have been burdened by a penalty and were not even able to reap what we sowed.” Some others will say: “This calamity has totally deprived us; how can we now spend on the upbringing of the family and spend on our daily living.” In Sūrah Qalam, the parable of the companions of the orchard is mentioned which portrays this complete situation:

إِنَّا بَلَوْنَاهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ إِذْ أَقْسَمُوا لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِينَ وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُونَ
فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَائِفٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ فَأَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيمِ فَتَنَادُوا مُصْبِحِينَ
أَنْ اغْدُوا عَلَى حَرْثِكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ فَانْظُرُوا لَهُمْ يَتَخَفَتُونَ أَنْ لَا
يَدْخُلَنَهَا الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَسْكِينٌ وَغَدُوا عَلَى حَرْدٍ قَادِرِينَ فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهَا قَالُوا إِنَّا
لَصَّالُونَ بَلْ نَحْنُ مُحْرَمُونَ (٦٨: ١٧-٢٧)

We put them through a test just as We put the owners of the orchard through a test when they swore that they would surely pick the fruit of their orchard in the morning and would not leave anything. Then whilst they were asleep, a mover from your Lord moved through it in such a manner that it became like a crop harvested. At daybreak, they called out to one another: “Go early in the morning to your plantation if you are to pick its fruit.” Then off they went whispering to one another: “No needy person should set foot in this orchard today.” And they proceeded with resolve and determination. But when they saw it, they cried out: “Surely we have lost our way; in fact, we have been ruined.” (68: 17-27)

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ الْمَاءَ الَّذِي تَشْرَبُونَ (٦٨) أَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْزِلُونَ (٦٩)²⁷

After mentioning the blessings related to food, attention is now drawn to the blessing of water. The question is asked by the Almighty: Have people deliberated on the water they drink; Is it they who bring it down from the clouds or is it We? The implication is that God’s power, wisdom and providence converts the bitter water of the seas into water vapours and then once again rains it down on man in the form of pure, sweet and

26. Indeed we have been fined; in fact we have been completely deprived.

27. Just reflect on the water which you drink! Was it you who sent it down from the clouds or We?

wholesome water; he drinks from it and so does his cattle and this rain also waters their lands. Who has this power to bring down rain from the clouds? It should remain in consideration that all the experiments done by scientists so far to create artificial rain are nothing beyond child play.

لَوْ نَشَاءُ جَعَلْنَاهُ أَجَاًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ (٧٠)²⁸

If the Almighty wants, He can make this water so bitter and sour that it becomes useless for man. The implication is that when God is able to turn the bitter into sweet, it is not difficult for Him to turn the sweet into bitter.

The words فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ mention what is entailed by providence: all these favours require that man remain obedient to his Lord or else get ready to face punishment for his ungratefulness. The status and significance of gratitude to God has already been highlighted in Sūrah Fātiḥah. Readers are required to look it up. It is this very sentiment which induces a person to take the first step towards his Lord, and after reaching his destination, he will express this very sentiment when he sees the results of his labour. The Qur'ānic words are: وَآخِرَ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِي تُورُونَ (٧١) أَأَنْتُمْ أَنْشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَا أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْشِئُونَ (٧٢)²⁹

After water, fire occupied a very significant place in the needs of life, especially for people who had to undertake long journeys in the deserts. At that time, neither were there any human settlements where in times of need fire could be made available nor was fire something of the sort which a person can carry with his provisions. Moreover, match sticks had not been invented till then. The Almighty in order to remind such needy people of His providence had created certain types of stones which can be rubbed together to produce fire. He was even more gracious in this regard by creating two particular trees which could produce fire after by rubbing two of its branches together. They are called *markh* and *'afār*. Sūrah Yasīn also mentions this tree. The verse asks its addressees to reflect on the fact whether it is God who fulfils this very big need or it is them.

نَحْنُ جَعَلْنَاهَا تَذْكِرَةً وَمَتَاعًا لِلْمُقْوِينَ (٧٣)³⁰

The Almighty has made this tree a reminder as well as a benefit for those who travel in the deserts. The word مُقْوِينَ is used for travellers who

28. If We desire, We can turn it totally bitter; so why do not you people express gratitude?

29. Just reflect on the fire which you light. Did you create its tree or We?

30. We made it a reminder, and for the traveller a very beneficial thing.

journey through deserts and desolate lands where it is difficult to obtain fire. The antecedent of the feminine pronoun in جَعَلْنَاهَا (tree) as well as the fire which it produces. In both cases, there will not be any difference in meaning.

The word تَذَكُّرٌ means “reminder”. Though this reminder has many aspects, I will allude to two of them which occupy special significance.

First, this is a great sign of God’s sustenance. His providence imposes the responsibility of accountability on a person. This entails that reward and punishment in Heaven and Hell respectively take place. I have been explaining this point at various places in this *tafsīr*.

Second, the information given by the Almighty that Hell will contain fire and also the tree of *zaqqūm* is a fact. No one should make fun of it thinking that it is against sense and reason. The God who can create fire from the evergreen branches of the trees of *markh* and *‘afār* has no problem in creating the tree of *zaqqūm* in Hell.

In verse sixty of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl, it has been mentioned that the people of the Quraysh who had no fear of the Hereafter would make fun of the Qur’ān that it informs of fire in Hell and at the same time says that it will also have the tree of *zaqqūm*. At that instance, a rejoinder to their making fun was given through another aspect which I have explained. Since in verses fifty two and fifty three too *zaqqūm* is mentioned, so once the fire producing tree is mentioned, attention was also directed to the fact that people who regard the union of fire and tree in Hell as impossible should learn a lesson from this tree in which God has combined both.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ (٧٤)³¹

Here at the end of the discussion, the Prophet (sws) is directed to strongly adhere to his stance and to keep glorifying God. The reason for emphasizing this is that as far as the arguments are concerned, they are in his favour, yet these stubborn people are not budging to accept them; therefore, the Prophet (sws) should not care about them; he should remain engaged in glorifying the Almighty i.e. celebrating his purity. The implication is that these people who have been blinded by their desires reckon that the Almighty has created this world only to bless them with luxury and comfort; they are not aware that the Almighty is above and too pure to create something for their jest or sport. It is incumbent upon Him to bring a day in which He rewards the grateful for their gratitude and takes to task the ingrates.

31. Glorify, then, the name of your Lord, the Supreme One.

The preposition *بِ* in *بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ* shows that the word here also embraces the meaning of *إِسْتِعَانَةٌ* (help) which would incorporate a further meaning in the expression viz. He should glorify the name of His Lord and seek His help to combat these circumstances.

The word *اسْمِ* shows that the only means of a person's association and relationship with the Almighty are His noble attributes. It is by comprehending them that one gets a comprehension of God which is the fountainhead of true knowledge and deeds.

Section III (Verses 75-96)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. The leaders of the Quraysh are addressed and told that the certain event the Qur'ān is informing them of is a reality. They should not try to escape from it or to refute it. The Qur'ān is not from among the nonsensical utterances of the soothsayers; it has come down from the preserved treasure of God's knowledge. It is a noble discourse which has been revealed through pure means to a pure Messenger. It is secure and free from tampering and interference of the devils. It is an eternal guidance and an everlasting spiritual food for them. They should not invite their doom by not valuing or honouring it and by refuting it. They should remember that no one can escape God's grasp and the elevation and relegation of which they are being informed will soon be seen by them with all its consequences and corollaries.

Readers may now proceed to read the subsequent verses.

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِمَوَاقِعِ النُّجُومِ (٧٥) وَإِنَّهُ لَقَسَمٌ لِّوَعْلَمُونَ عَظِيمٌ (٧٦) إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ (٧٧) فِي كِتَابٍ مَّكْنُونٍ (٧٨) لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ (٧٩) تَنْزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٨٠) أَفَبِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَنْتُمْ مُدْهِنُونَ (٨١) وَتَجْعَلُونَ رِزْقَكُمْ أَنْتُمْ تُكْذِبُونَ (٨٢) فَلَوْلَا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْخُلُقُومَ (٨٣) وَأَنْتُمْ حِينِيذٍ تَنْظُرُونَ (٨٤) وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٨٥) فَلَوْلَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ (٨٦) تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٨٧) فَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (٨٨) قَرُوحٌ وَرِيحَانٌ وَجَنَّةٌ نَّعِيمٌ (٨٩) وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ (٩٠) فَسَلَامٌ لَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ (٩١) وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكْذِبِينَ الضَّالِّينَ (٩٢) فَنُزُلٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ (٩٣) وَتَصْلِيَةٌ جَهِيمٍ (٩٤) إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ (٩٥) فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ (٩٦)

Thus no! I swear by the place in which the stars fall! And indeed this is a mighty oath if you but know it! Indeed, this is a glorious Qur'ān! In a protected book. None touch it except the purified; a revelation from the Lord of the Universe. So do you people show indifference to this discourse and refute what is sustenance for you! (75-82)

If you think that you are subservient to no one, then at that time why do not you when under your very eyes a man's soul reaches his throat and We are nearer to him than you, though you cannot see Us – so why do not you restore this person's life if you are subservient to no one if you are truthful. (83-87)

Thus, if he is from among the favoured ones, for him is bliss and ecstasy and a garden of delight. And if he is from among the companions of the right hand, the peace be to you O companion of the right hand. And if he is from those who have denied and has been led astray, then for him is the feast of scalding water and entry to Hell. (88-94)

Indeed all these things are true and inevitable. Glorify, then, the name of your Lord, the Supreme One. (95-96)

Explanation

فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِمَوَاقِعِ النُّجُومِ (٧٥)³²

Here the particle لَا is not connected to the next word أَقْسِمُ. It is totally separate from it. Before the affirmation, the particle serves to negate the wrong view of the addressee. Such a negation is very common in Arabic as well as in the Qur'ān. In Sūrah Nisā', the words are: فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ (٤: ٦٥) (but they will not – I swear by your Lord – they will not be true believers until they seek your arbitration in their disputes, (4: 65)). In other words, if these Hypocrites think that by merely uttering words they have embraced faith, then this notion of theirs is absolutely wrong. After this, it is stated on oath that these people cannot be true believers until they accept Muḥammad (sws) as the arbitrator in all their disputes.

In the verse under discussion too, before the oath, the particle لَا serves to refute the false notion of the addressees that the Qur'ān, God forbid, is a revelation from among the nonsensical utterances of the soothsayers. After that, an oath is sworn by the exaltedness and sanctity of the Qur'ān and by the fact that it is the word of God. This style of language is a very natural style and for this reason is found in every language. It is even present in the Urdu language (the case of English is no different). When it is said: "No by God! The truth is this," we employ this very style and the

32. Thus no! I swear by the place in which the stars fall!

objective is to negate some notion, view or objection of an addressee before affirming the real truth. The eloquence in this style is that so baseless is the objection of the objector that the speaker does not even want to wait for a moment to put up with it. He is not even ready to negate it after explaining the true aspect.

Most people regard لَا to be superfluous. However, in the first place, there are no superfluous words in an eloquent discourse, but if, for the sake of supposition there are, then there is great danger in regarding the letter لَا to be so. If without any principle, this letter is regarded to be superfluous, then this can open up a lot of forbidden things in religion. However, a detailed discussion on this issue is not required here. Inshallāh under verse twenty nine (لِئَلَّا يَعْلَمَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ) of the coming sūrah, Sūrah Ḥadīd, I will discuss this issue in detail. The لَا in that verse too has been regarded as superfluous by the exegetes. I will, God willing show, that this is in full accordance with the linguistic style of Arabic.

The word مَوَاقِع is the plural of مَوْعٍ which means the place where something happens or falls. Here it is used for the abodes and check-posts from where shooting stars are pelted at the devils who try eavesdrop on divine secrets. It is evident from the Qur'ān that there were devils among the jinn who had selected some special abodes in the heavens in which they would sit for this purpose. At the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān, the Almighty made special arrangements to protect his revelations from their interference: those who would try to sit in these abodes to eavesdrop would be pelted with shooting stars. The jinn themselves have acknowledged this fact, as recorded in Sūrah Jinn thus:

وَأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَاءَ فَوَجَدْنَاهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيدًا وَشُهُبًا وَأَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ
لِلسَّمْعِ فَمَنْ يَسْتَمِعِ الْآنَ يَجِدْ لَهُ شِهَابًا رَصَدًا (٧٢: ٨-٩)

And we deeply observed the heavens and found it filled with stern guards and darting stars. And we were able to sit in some of its stations to eavesdrop, but now whoever tries to eavesdrop finds a darting meteor waiting for him. (72:8-9)

In my opinion, the word used for the ambushes of the jinn in Sūrah Jinn is called مَوَاقِع in the verse under discussion. The only difference is that the first word refers to their ambushes and the second to the targets of the shooting stars. The word النُّجُوم here refers to shooting stars. In Sūrah Mulk, the words used are: وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ (٦٧: ٥) (and We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps and made them a means of bombardment on the devils, (67:5)). Explanation

on these shooting stars is found in verses 1-5 of Sūrah Najm and verse 35 of Sūrah Raḥmān. Readers may look it up.

وَأِنَّهُ لَقَسَمٌ لِّوَتَّعْلَمُونَ عَظِيمٌ (٧٦)³³

This is a very apt parenthetical sentence between the object of the oath and the complement of the oath. The implication is that just as these people very stubbornly regard the Qur'ān to be inspired by the devils, in the same manner they will ask what the relation of shooting stars with the bombardment of the devils is; however, if they reflect, they will come to know that this oath carries a great testimony in it: the jinn and the devils have no access to the divine realm as claimed by the soothsayers. If anyone wants to get there, the Almighty has made elaborate arrangements to deal with him. No one can protect himself from the shooting stars of God. In other words, whether they are able to know this or not and whether they believe in it or not, the Almighty has revealed a great secret of this universe in this oath.

إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ (٧٧) فِي كِتَابٍ مَّكْنُونٍ (٧٨) لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ (٧٩) تَنْزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٨٠)³⁴

After the oath, this is the complement of the oath. It has been explained many a time in this *tafsīr* that the oaths which occur in the Qur'ān are meant to bear witness. In other words, after referring to the fact that there exists an arrangement to pelt the devils on their interference, the addressees are warned that they should not regard this Qur'ān to be a discourse of the soothsayers; it is a very noble and exalted discourse. It is found in a protected book with the Almighty and no one except His pure angels can have access to it; only the angels which are close to God can touch it; the jinn and devils cannot even come near it.

The implication of the words تَنْزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ is that they should not, God forbid, equate Satanic revelations that come to the soothsayers with the Qur'ān. It is not inspired by the devils; it is inspired by the Almighty. The guarded tablet is its source. Except for the angels which are close to God, no one has access to it. It is Gabriel, the trustworthy who is the closest among angels to God who brings it down, and devils can in no way influence them. It was revealed to Muḥammad (sws) whom the Almighty has protected from any kind of misguidance and deviation.

33. And indeed this is a mighty oath if you but know it!

34. Indeed, this is a glorious Qur'ān. In a protected book. None touch it except the purified; a revelation from the Lord of the Universe.

Our jurists have deduced a certain etiquette relating to ritual purity from the verse: لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ. In their opinion, it is only in the state of this purity that a person is allowed to touch or read the Qur'ān. However, it is evident from the context of the verse that this etiquette has no direct bearing on it. For this reason, whether our readers in the light of arguments accept these deductions or reject them, they fall beyond the ambit of our discussion. So I will not attempt to raise it here. However, I will only say that the view of those jurists who impose the same conditions of ritual purity in orally reading the Qur'ān or touching it which are required for offering the prayer are based on extremism. The Qur'ān is the book of God and hence worthy of respect from every aspect. At the same time, it is a means for us to find out good and evil, truth and untruth; it is also a reference for making inferences and the basis of religious reasoning. If it is necessary for a person to be ritually pure and be in the state of *wudū* if he needs to touch it or read any of its verses or *sūrahs*, or give its reference, then this would be an unbearable burden which would be against the religion of nature. By imposing such unnatural restrictions, the same concept of Qur'ān's respect would arise for which Jesus (sws) has used the following words: "No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house." (Matthew, 5:15)

أَفَبِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَنْتُمْ مُدْهِنُونَ (٨١)³⁵

The word *إدھان* means "to be indifferent, careless and lazy". After mentioning the exaltedness of the Qur'ān, the question is posed to them: Does this Qur'ān which has been revealed in such an elaborate manner by the Almighty deserve the indifference from them that they are showing?

The implication is that they are not so naive and visionless that they are not able to distinguish a pebble from a pearl; they very well know the difference but do not want to accept the Qur'ān; for this reason they are showing indifference to it by regarding it to be the discourse of the soothsayers; however, they should remember that showing indifference to a reality cannot change it; a reality is always a reality and they will have to face it; it would have been in their own interest if they had given it due importance.

وَتَجْعَلُونَ رِزْقَكُمْ أَنْتُمْ تُكَذِّبُونَ (٨٢)³⁶

The word *رِزْق* here refers to divine revelation or in other words to the

35. So do you people show indifference to this discourse.

36. And refute what is sustenance for you!

Qur'ān. In ancient scriptures as well as in the Qur'an, divine revelation is called رَزَق at various places. I have already cited examples of this usage at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*. Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God," (Matthew, 4:4)). The Qur'ān has also called divine revelation as life: (٢٤:٨) اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ (Obey God and the messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life, (8:24)). The verse would mean that the Almighty revealed divine sustenance for them so that they could attain eternal life from it; however, it is their misfortune that they are showing a degrading attitude towards it and not giving it its due importance.

فَلَوْلَا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْخُلُقُومَ (٨٣) وَأَنْتُمْ حِينِيذٍ تَنْظُرُونَ (٨٤) وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٨٥) فَلَوْلَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ (٨٦) تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٨٧)³⁷

The implication of these verses is that why does not a person able to save himself or any of his near ones from the jaws of death if by obdurately making fun of the Qur'ān he thinks that the reward and punishment he is being threatened with is merely a bluff and that he is subservient to no one and that he will not be held accountable to anyone for his words and deeds. When death overtakes a person, at that time he finds himself to be alone and helpless and has to consign his soul to the angel of death. So while observing one's helplessness why does he regard himself to be all in all and free from any accountability? In verse sixty above, the words were: نَحْنُ قَدَرْنَا بَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُسْبُوقِينَ (We have ordained death among you, and We are not helpless). It is this reality which is divulged here in another way so that no one should consider himself to be all in all; no one is beyond God's grasp; everyone is bound to face death and death is destined for the very reason that it gathers all the dead so that they can be presented before God on an appointed day.

The subject of the verb بَلَغَتْ الْخُلُقُومَ in نَفْسٌ (the soul) and is suppressed here because of concomitant indications. The meaning of the verse is: when the soul of a person gets stuck in his throat at the time of death. The subject of the verb is similarly suppressed in Sūrah Qiyāmah: (٢٦:٧٥) كَلَّا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ التَّرَاقِيَ (Certainly not! On the Day when the soul will be stuck in the collar-bone, (75:26)). With respect to eloquence,

37. If you think that you are subservient to no one, then at that time why do not you when under your very eyes a man's soul reaches his throat and We are nearer to him than you, though you cannot see Us – so why do not you restore this person's life if you are subservient to no one if you are truthful.

the benefit of such an ellipses is that the horror of the event because of ambiguity becomes even more potent and effective.

The answer to *لَوْلَا* is coming up ahead in a very effective manner.

The implication of the verse *وَأَنْتُمْ حِينِيذٍ تَنْظُرُونَ* is that it is not so that the event of death takes place without other people knowing it; the fact of the matter is that the near ones of the dying person and his well-wishers including his doctor are present around him; however, before their very eyes, the angel of death claims his soul and no one can stop him. No one can say that had he been near, he would have stopped the angel of death from doing his job; all their efforts and plans turn out to be useless in this regard.

The antecedent of the pronoun *إِلَيْهِ* in *لَا تُبْصِرُونَ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ* is the dying person. His attendants are with him and God is even nearer to him but they cannot see Him. They can see the hand of their doctor but not the hand of the angel of death – how efficiently he claims the soul.

The verses *فَلَوْلَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ* are an answer to the *لَوْلَا* mentioned above. Since the conditional clause and its answer were distanced from one another, the conditional clause has been repeated here. The verse says that if they think that they are not subservient to anyone who can seize them and punish them, then why do not they bring back to its body the soul claimed by the angel of death right before their eyes. The word *مَدِينِينَ* means “to be subservient and to be under control”.

فَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (٨٨) فَرَوْحٌ وَرَيْحَانٌ وَجَنَّةٌ نَعِيمٌ (٨٩)³⁸

People should not remain under the misconception that once a person dies everything will end; the fact of the matter is that the real phase will ensue after death which is mentioned above by the words: *وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً* (٧). On that day, people will be necessarily divided into three categories: either a person will belong to the favoured ones or the companions of the right hand or the companions of the left hand. The verses under discussion say that if the person is from among the favoured ones, then for him there is eternal bliss and ecstasy and a blessed orchard. The word *رَوْحٌ* means “bliss” and the word *رَيْحَانٌ* here means “ecstasy”. In Sūrah Raḥmān, this word has been discussed. The real meaning of *رَيْحَانٌ* is that of a flower; however, it is also used in what it entails, ie. ecstasy and sweet smell.

38. Thus, if he is from among the favoured ones, for him is bliss and ecstasy and a garden of delight.

وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ (٩٠) فَسَلَامٌ لَكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ (٩١)³⁹

If the person is from among the companions of the right hand, he will receive praise from God and His angels: O one from the companions of the right hand! For you is peace and congratulations.

The word مِنْ in أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ لَكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ does not occur as a preposition as has been generally understood by our exegetes. It occurs as an explanation of the pronoun of address in لَكَ. For this reason, in my opinion, following is an incorrect translation of the second verse: "Peace be to you from the companions of the right hand". The correct translation would be: "O companion of the right hand! Peace be for you". Concealed in these salutations and peace is everything which is mentioned earlier regarding the status of the companions of the right hand,

وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ الضَّالِّينَ (٩٢) فَنُزُلٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ (٩٣) وَتَصْلِيَةٌ جَهِيمٍ (٩٤)⁴⁰

Mentioned in these verses is the fate of the companions of the left hand. However, they are not mentioned by this title; they are addressed with reference to their real crime الْمُكَذِّبِينَ الضَّالِّينَ (the rejecters and the misled) so that besides their fate, their crime is also delineated, and so that this crime is fully associated with the misguided and rejecters of the Quraysh. Earlier in verses 51-54, the Quraysh are addressed and told: ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ أَنتُمُ الضَّالُّونَ الْمُكَذِّبُونَ (٥١) لَا يَكُونُ مِنْ شَجَرٍ مِّنْ زُقُومٍ (٥٢) فَمَالُؤُونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ (٥٣) فَشَارِبُونَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَمِيمِ. This same thing is stated here in a concise manner. I have already explained the difference between الضَّالُّونَ and الْمُكَذِّبُونَ.

It is evident from the words وَتَصْلِيَةٌ جَهِيمٍ (٩٤) فَنُزُلٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ (٩٣) that the very first nourishment they will be greeted with will be boiling water. After that, they will be flung into the real torment of Hell.

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ (٩٥) فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ (٩٦)⁴¹

These verses urge the Prophet (sws) to exercise patience and perseverance and they assure him. He is told that whatever has been mentioned earlier are certain facts. There is no possibility of any doubt in them. If the people of his nation refuse to believe in them, then he should

39. And if he is from among the companions of the right hand, the peace be to you O companion of the right hand.

40. And if he is from those who have denied and has been led astray, then for him is the feast of scalding water and entry to Hell.

41. Indeed all these things are true and inevitable. Glorify then, the name of your Lord, the Supreme One.

leave them to themselves and glorify the Almighty. I have already explained the background and meaning of the word تَسْبِيحٌ (glorification) under verse seventy four.

With these lines, I come to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr*. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى إِحْسَانِهِ (so gratitude be to God for His favours).

Raḥmānābād,

24th October, 1977 AD

11th Dhū al-Qa'dah, 1397 AH
